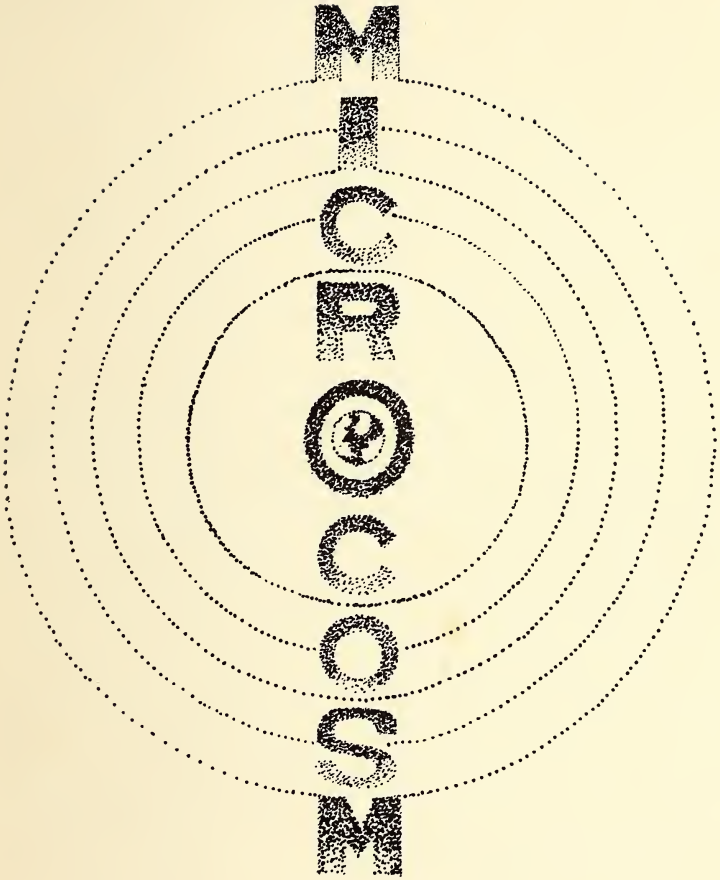

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Editor's Notes

Since the fall of 1973, the Division of Humanities at Copiah-Lincoln Junior College has sponsored the *Microcosm* junior college competition. In that same year, the high school division competition was added. Each year thereafter, the *Microcosm* staff has printed two issues.

The Mississippi Junior College Creative Writing Association, founded in 1978, sponsors a state-wide junior college writing competition and a writing workshop each year. The first and second place winners from Copiah-Lincoln's campus competition qualified for entry in the statewide competition. At the workshop, Tammy M. Smith received first place award in short story competition and third place in drama. Lisa Phillips won first place in informal essay, "The Bear and the Eagle," which was printed in the fall 1982 edition of *Microcosm*. Glen Hearn received Honorable Mention in poetry. The Mississippi Junior College Creative Writing Association publishes *The Junior College Writer*, containing most of the winning entries.

The *Microcosm* staff, who believe the old adage "everyone has a story to tell," received many entries from all parts of the district. Most were poetry and short stories, plus a number of informal and formal essays. Each entry was carefully considered, and it was evident that several students in the area have creative talent worth developing.

Microcosm, because of lack of space, is unable to publish the following winning entries in the junior division:

Short Story

"Death Touchs Midas ..... Lucy Lambright
"From Carrie with Love ..... Eunice F. McClelland
"The Thing" ..... Kent Holley

Informal Essay

"What Difference Does It Make?" ..... Ellie Henderson

Formal Essay

"The Isolation Theme
"In Two Major Hemingway Works" ..... Amanda Byrd

Poetry

"Surrealism" ..... Wanda Parsons
"Stopping by Kitchen on a Woe-y Evening" ..... Penny Sullivan
"Horses" ..... Janet Campbell

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Uncle Sidney's Laying Out

It's a hot day in the middle of summer, 1967, and I am about five years old. As we drive down the dry gravel road, I look out the back window and see two trails of dust following our black and white Plymouth. Soon we slow down and pull into the yard of an old unpainted house. Across the road is a vast cotton field, the withered stalks somehow still holding their soft white or brown products. I recall how Uncle Sidney took me out there a couple of summers before and let me pick cotton. He can't do that now.

There are some other cars in the yard, a couple of wagons, and a rusty bicycle. The horses to the wagons are tied to a shady oak tree. Already, as I get out of the car, my feet are sweaty in their black patent leather shoes. We walk up the front porch steps, and I notice greenish-yellow moss growing in patches on the house. I start to rub some of it off but Mama grabs my hand and leads me through the door.

It's dark inside. By the light from the screen door, I see photographs of people I never knew; their faces, enclosed in curved glass behind thick wooden frames, are scattered at random on the walls in the hall. I think of asking Mama why it is so dark, then I see that all the thick curtains are closed. We go in the front room where everyone is; all the aunts and uncles and cousins, many of whom I don't know, turn and look. Everyone is solemnly dressed; even I, in my navy blue sailor dress, fit in. There is a cleared-away area near the front windows. Uncle Sidney is there in his coffin, on top of a low, heavy table. Whispers of "Don't he look peaceful " and "Just like he's asleep" seem to echo off the high, dark walls. Nearby, an old man in a shiny black suit says to another, "I hepped lay 'im out. He was easier'n most of 'em."

The other man nods. "Sidney always was right thoughtful of others."

One of the many aunts, I assume, comes over to me. She is thin, tall, Pentecostal She squats down to my level, and it hear her knees pop. "Have you seen your Uncle Sidney yet?" she asks. I look down at my feet and shake my head. "Well, come with me, and I'll show him to you."

I take her hand and she leads me to the coffin; then she lifts me up and lets me look in. The two lamps on each end of the coffin make flickering shapes across his face, and I think I see his

eyelash blink. I suck in my breath and look at the Aunt. Apparently she doesn't see what I see, because she whispers, "He's just gone to see Jesus."

Then I notice what he is wearing. "Why does he have on his overalls?" I ask, puzzled. Grandaddy Harwell wore his Sunday suit when he was buried.

The Aunt looks at me and smiles. "Well, that's what he wanted. He wanted to go see Jesus in his overalls, he said, 'cause that's what Jesus always seen him in."

The explanation is satisfactory; in fact, I don't blame him. Going to see Jesus is probably a long, hard trip, and anyone doing it wouldn't want to be uncomfortable-- "Does he have on his shoes?" I ask.

"Ah-yes, he does," The Aunt says, shifting me on her hip.

"What kind" I persist.

"His everyday shoes,"she answers, finally putting me on the floor.

"That's good," I reply. At least he doesn't have to contend with patent leather shoes, I add to myself.

Just then, Mama comes to me. "Hello, Nora," she says to the aunt. "Melissa, this is your cousin Nora. You knew that, didn't you?"

"Yes, m'am," I say, half truthfully. I did know that she must be related to me. While Mama and Cousin Nora talk about how bad it is and how they're going to miss Uncle Sidney in the family, I wander over to the men, where Daddy is.

The old man in the shiny suit is talking. "Now, I had one, one time, that did give me a problem," he tells. "Fell dead on his face, an' when they found 'im out in the field, he was already plumb cold. An' his right arm was bent up to his chest, an' they couldn't move that arm fer nuthin'. Looked funny thataway, y'know. So when I got there they asked me what t'do. I didn't really know, myself; wouldn't move for me, neither. So I figgered, why don't we just put his clothes on with 'im like that, and put a big purty bunch o' posies in his hand, an' leave it like it is. And so that's what I did.

"Worst 'un I ever did have to do was this girl an' her little baby. 'Course, that was before all this hospital an' funeral home doin's- now them, they'll take a pore man fer an arm an' a leg, and don't care no more 'bout you then they would that crack in th' floor. Well, 'aout this girl an' her little ol' baby. Girl wasn't no more'n fourteen years old-" then he sees me and suddenly stops.

I go over to Daddy and stand by him.

"That 'un yours, Curtis?" another old man says. Daddy nods. The old man kneels down and pats my head. "I'm your Uncle Melvin. You remember your Aunt Cora Mae, don't cha? Well, I'm Uncle Melvin."

I nod. Aunt Cora Mae used to wear overalls, too. She wore her hair short and drove a log truck. This Uncle Melvin, her husband, was notorious in Mama's book; she still says it was Uncle Melvin who drove Aunt Cora Mae to her grave. She doesn't have anything to do with him. I stretch my neck, making sure Mama doesn't see him talking to me. She doesn't.

The old man in the shiny suit smiles at me. "I can tell where you got that purty red hair."

I grimace, as usual. "I don't like it," I tell him. They all very quietly laugh, a laugh that is reserved for funerals and before church time.

Mama comes to the group. "Come here." she says, taking my hand. "Aunt Winnizell wants to see you."

Aunt Winnizell is a big, tall woman. She looks strong enough to carry Uncle Sidney's coffin by herself. Her snowy white hair is carefully bunned in the back and is held by tortoiseshell combs, and her mouth is one pale little line. She looks me over critically, her Indian nose occasionally quivering. "Well," she finally announces, "she does have pretty red hair. At least."

Mama fiddles with my collar and smooths my hair, smiling nervously. Something tells me that I shouldn't tell this one I don't like my hair. Aunt Winnizell, her verdict reached, leans back in her chair, and the seat pops loudly. I manage to tiptoe away while Mama and the other women talk about how peaceful Uncle Sidney looks and how Aunt Gracie, his widow, is taking it. Looking as inconspicuous as possible, I get past the men, out on the dogtrot, and soon I am in the kitchen. There is half of a pound cake left on the table. protected from flies by a screen bonnet, and I snitch a tiny slice. Next, I take off my shoes and socks on the porch. An old orange-and-white tomcat nearby looks lazily at me and yawns, then goes back to sleep. Chickens are taking sunbaths, and I hear hogs grunting in a distant pen shaded by a fig tree. The dark, cool mud under the shelf near the well looks inviting , but I know what can happen to undertoes when mud get to them; for seemingly no reason at all, the top layer of skin cuts open and stings badly. So I resist the temptation of the mud. I

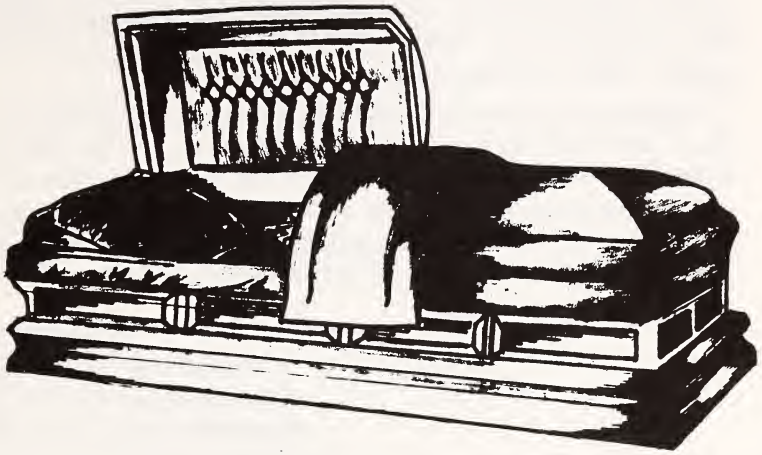
simply wander around in the lush green grass, pick some blackberries growing on the fence, and pop them in my mouth. Mama and Daddy hadn't said how long we would stay, although I know the funeral is tomorrow morning. Will we have to stay the whole night? Will I have to sleep on the floor? The prospects are dismal. I walk back to the porch and sit on the top step, day-dreaming about all sorts of things: winter, the injustices of being a child, chickens, horses and wagons, growing up someday, and clouds.

Suddenly the sun begins to set. Did I go to sleep? Maybe I did. I look around (did Mama and Daddy leave and forget me?) and see Daddy looking at me through the screen door. "They're just about to eat now," he says. "You coming in?"

"Any fried chicken?" Fried chicken is staple funeral food.

"A great big pot of it," he replies and opens the door for me as I heave up. Several lamps have been lit in the kitchen, and their light reflects brightly off wrinkled tin foil. Where only the pound cake remnant had been, there is now a red-and-white checked talecloth, almost completely covered by pots and plates and bowls. The fried chicken, potato salad, bisquits and rolls, and apple pie, the pound cake, and an iced strawberry cake cover the table like a feast. I get in line, Daddy hands me a plate and utensils, and I await my turn. When I get to the table, I see that Aunt Winnizell is presiding over the fried chicken. She starts to give me a wing, then changes her mind and plunks a drumstick on my plate.

"Thank you," I whisper as Daddy spoons a bit of potato salad on my plate. Maybe she's nice after all-- yes, m'am a roll Thank you. Now, which dessert do I want? I decide on the strawberry cake. All the old people are avoiding it because the tiny seeds hurt their gums. Cousin Nora hands me a Dixie cup full of iced tea. I want to go back out on the porch to eat, but mosquitoes are probably out, and their bites swell up on me. People are standing around in the kitchen, out on the dogtrot, even in the bedroom, but no one goes in the front room with his food. It's as though they're afraid they might upset Uncle Sidney by eating in front of him and not offering him anything. I stand near the back door. When I realize this is too cumbersome for standing up, I simply sit down near the table on the floor and eat. It's a good thing Mama doesn't see that.



It's hard to see faces in the lamplight, and those I can see are distorted. On the walls there are huge, hunched shadows. A chill suddenly goes through my body. Someday, all of these people will be lying in coffins in front rooms, even me. The shadows begin to scare me; it's as though the shadows are the ghosts of the people, hunched over because they are coming to get me-- I put my food down and run to find Mama and Daddy.

They are eating as though nothing has happened. Daddy sees my frightened face and asks me what is wrong. I can't get it out, so I start to cry. All the surrounding aunts start asking what's wrong and why am I crying, and Mama reaches over and picks me up on her lap. "I think she's just tired. We'd better be going soon, anyway," she says. When the aunts are sure nothing is wrong and turn away, Mama whispers, "Shame on you! A big girl like you, crying!" There is no comfort to be found, I see, so I scramble down and go back to the kitchen out on the porch and get my shoes and socks.

When I come back, Mama and Daddy are telling everyone goodbye and goodnight. Mama grabs my hand and leads me out the front door, a pie plate in her other hand. "What was the matter with you back in there" she whispers. I still can't tell her, so I say nothing.

The horses snort as we walk by them. I look at the cotton field, silver in the moonlight, and think about the dead man whose arm wouldn't move. I feel that chill again, but that's all. I ask Daddy, "Who's gonna pick the cotton now?"

"I suppose one of the boys will," he answers as he opens the car door. The "boys" are about his age. We all get in, and he starts the motor. The horses neigh at the sudden noise, and we are once again on the dusty gravel road. Tomorrow morning we will come back for the funeral, but now I look back through the rear window at the silver cotton bolls in the field, until they are out of sight.

TammySmith
First Place, Short Story
Mississippi Junior College
Creative Writing Association

The Young Lion

The young lion searches futilely.
To satisfy the hunger deep inside his bowels.
A silent rumble blossoms to a tender growl.
The growl gives birth to a gnaw
And the gnaw screams endlessly
Pain, puncturing pain
Like a dull knife escaping from within.
He slithers through foliage and fields,
A young cat, a tough cat

Who struts within his den
Hiding the pain, lying to his friends.

Desperately searching for prey,
He pleads, let it be today.
The carcass remains alone.
An easy victim, defenseless,
Picked and ripped to the bone.
A pompous young cat, a tough cat
Who struts within his den,
Bloated with pleasure, bragging to his friends.

Glen Hearn
First place poetry
Microcosm Award
Honorable Mention
Mississippi Junior College
Creative Writing Competition

Freedom of Class

Classes, classes, and more classes. It seems as if classes are getting in the way of total college bliss. Although they take up only around six hours of a twenty-four hour day, they ruin my plans to lie around in bed all day watching soap operas. Sure, they prepare me for a good job. And, yes, they do increase my knowledge. But why can't I choose where, when, and for how long we meet? It would suit my schedule to meet my Western Civilization teacher on front campus, between coming from the recreation hall and going to the grill.

"Yes, Coach, but we'll have to make this fast. My song is playing on the jukebox. Napoleon. He did What? When? How? long did that war last? Okay, got it, All right I'd like to take my test day after tomorrow. I plan to put a permanent in my hair tomorrow. Okie-dokie! Bye."

Or maybe I could have my biology teacher meet me at the basketball court. We could discuss the traits of the paramecium between free shots. Also, it would be much easier to discuss E.B. White's essay with my teacher over the phone. That way, I could finish polishing my nails and reading my Seventeen magazine.

But then again, no classes... I wouldn't be able to sit by that cute boy in my journalism class. And there wouldn't be any more excuses to spend the whole afternoon together, cramming for the next day's test. And, if there weren't any more regular class meetings, the guys would start staying at home. They would come back only a couple of days out of the week. They would start to date only the girls from their hometowns. Then they would get married, and there would be no one who is single left going to college. All of us girls would never marry.

Well, it is time for class now I shouldn't go. I think I will convince the whole campus to boycott classes. We will rebel against regular class meeting.!! We will decide where, when, and how long we want our classes. We will stay at the grill longer, play basketball all afternoon, do our nails, and read our magazines. We will have our freedom!!!--- Where are my books Forget our freedom. I am going to class. I am not about to die an old maid.

Pam McDonald
Second Place, Informal Essay
Microcosm Award

Frozen Memories

The writer's pen can never tell
Nor artist's brush relate,
Cold blindness of the soul,.
The icy hand of fate.

Memories of events drift in,
A frosty burning hold;
A paralyzing price to pay--
Dues of growing old.

To hold them in - a futile wish
But even if it's done,
A lonely feeling overcomes;
It seems that fate has won.

Overshrounding darkness--
Thoughts frozen in time
Fill the heart with cold regrets
As though the soul were blind.

David Kyzar
Third Place, poetry
Microcosm Award

Marriage is an institution of God joining a man and woman into a close and intimate union. For a marriage to be successful, both man and woman must be willing to communicate. Without communication, happiness cannot be shared and problems cannot be solved. In "Chrysanthemums" John Steinbeck demonstrates a marriage in trouble because of the lack of communication. John Steinbeck's usage of symbols illustrates Elisa Allen's lonely life.

The fog and the valley illustrate the seclusion in Elisa's life. Symbolically, "The high grey-fannel fog of winter closed off the Salinas Valley from the sky and from all the rest of the world. On every sede it sat like a lid on the mountains and made of the great valley a closed pot." Elisa is shut off from her husband Henry and the rest of the world. She lives in Salinas Valley and does not come in contact with the outside world very often. Elisa and Henry do not share the same interests; therefore, they do not have much to discuss. Like the valley, her life is like a closed pot. She has to suppress her feelings because she has on one to share them with. Henry does not give her the attention she needs.

The yellow leaves and the cold atmosphere symbolize the lifelessness of Elisa's marriage. Coinciding with this phase of her life is the following quotation: "On the foothill ranches across the Salinas River, the yellow stubble fields seemed to be bathed in a pale cold sunshine, but there was no sunshine in the valley now in December. The thick willow scrub along the river flamed with sharp and positive yellow leaves." Just as there is a lack of sunshine in the world around Elisa and Henry, there is also a lack of communication between the two. The yellow stubble fields are indicative of the barrenness of her life. The coldness in their relationship is causing loneliness on Elisa's part. Their insensitiveness to each other is a factor that is causing their marriage to start slowly dying. The relationship they have is an indirectly cold one. They are not harsh or brusque toward one another; they just do not have any compassion for each other. They definitely are not intimate.

The fence is a separation between Elisa and Henry. They live in separate worlds. Elisa's world is in the yard and house. Her enthusiasm for her little world is explained when she asks, "Did

you ever hear of planting hands?" Then enthusiastically she proceeds to answer her question, "Well, I can only tell you what it feels like. It's when you're picking off the buds you don't want. Everything goes right down into your fingertips. You watch your fingers work. They do it themselves. You can feel how it is. They pick and pick the buds. They never make a mistake. They're with the plant. Do you see? Your fingers and the plant. You can feel that, right up your arm. They know. They never make a mistake. You can feel it. When you're like that you can't do anything wrong. Do you see that ? Can you understand" Her energies are directed toward her flowers. Conversely, Henry's world is the farm and barn. "Across the river, on Henry Allen's foothill ranch there was little work to be done, for the hay was cut and stored and the orchards were plowed up to receive the rain deeply when it should come. The cattle on the higher slopes were becoming shaggy and rough-coated. "Henry's pride is not his wife's superior superior chrysanthemums." His smugness is caused by his accomplishments in his separate world.

A fence divides these two worlds, protecting Elisa's flower garden from Henry's cattle, dogs, and chickens. Neither one will actually open the gate and step into the other's world, so the problems cannot be resolved. Symbolically, the fence is the barrier in their communication with each other. Elisa cannot open up and freely discuss her feelings with her husband, and Henry cannot seem to see his wife needs love, attention and appreciation. One evening, Elisa pretties herself and tries to break through the barrier by taking a first step. But she fails in communicating her needs to Henry.

John Steinbeck's usage of symbols illustrates Elisa Allen's life. Her marriage is slowly dying. She and Henry are "shut off" from each other and "shut in" within their own worlds.

Ellen L. May
First Place, Formal Essay
Microcosm Award

Dr. Who's Laugh Lines

I want a scarf like Dr. Who:
I want to swing it nonchalantly
Around my neck, my legs--
Like Isadora Duncan, I shall
Die with my scarf on.

I want theme music like Dr. Who ;
I want to span the universe
With captivating electronic music
Encircling my Peter Max poster-face,
My eyes a clear emerald green.

I want a mind like Dr. Who;
I want to save each planet from
Dastardly intergallactical villains
Playing Pac-Man on their supersize
Real life, sound-effected screens.

I want a series like Dr. Who;
I want to have fun rambling around
A set, whisking my scarf like a
Dustmop, ponderously, making lots of
Hard-earned pounds and pence.

Tammy M. Smith
Second Place, Poetry
Microcosm Award

Boom!

The fertile blackness enveloped me as I looked on, the red glow of the last explosion fleeing. It had left the once green rich earth black with only charred remnants of wood to represent trees. All the animals had died. The smaller ones burned to ash, with no traces left. I could still see a dull gray bone among the ruins, perhaps from a larger animal, or one of us.

The valley was covered with ash, the wind picked it up, seemed to hold it for a moment, wondering if it would be wise to spread this aura of death; then upon deciding, died down. The ash dropped back to the dark earth.

Now, no plants will grow here. Those that do will soon die; the last blast blew away the clouds forever. No more rain shall come.

I saw the last red glow; the end is very near for me. We all saw the end coming, but no one was willing to accept the finality of it all--not one more curtain call, ever.

God saw it coming and turned His back. Why should He even try to care. We were going to destroy each other, until there was no one else to destroy. Our blood lines have been tainted since the days of Cain and Abel.

I don't know what to do. I'm lost and losing control. I should pray that perhaps God has made a mistake and cursed the wrong planet. But I know He won't listen.

Belynda Ballard
Second place, short story
Microcosm Award

An Examination of "A Curtain of Green"

Eudora Welty possesses the ability to express her thoughts in practically perfect stories. Her writing upholds the requirements of good writing. She has a special ability for tying the elements of her stories together to support the theme. This can be seen in "A Curtain of Green." The characterization, the setting, and the action support the theme of renewal.

The impressive characterization of Mrs. Larkin portrays a great need for a renewal in her life. After the death of her husband she centers her life around grief. She does not care about herself or about what is going on in the world, outside of her curtain of green. Because of her continuous grief and unconcerned attitude towards the world, she becomes isolated and lonely. Mrs. Larkin no longer shares with anyone and this causes her neighbors to stop visiting with her. Even though she works strenuously in her garden, she lives her life in slow motion without adventure or real life. These characteristics of Mrs. Larkin distinctly show the need for a vital change in her life.

The setting plays an important role in developing the theme of renewal. Mrs. Larkin's garden is a dense, irregular mass of plants. She intends for her garden to be unorganized and overflowing. She does not want beauty,"if she thought of beauty at all...she certainly did not strive for it in her garden." Beauty in her garden would draw attention to her, and she wants to be left alone. Her garden is described as being a jungle which gives a feeling of primitive or uncivilized life. This primitive force becomes evident in the action of the story.

The action of the story is the crucial evidence that shows that Mrs. Larkin is in desperate need for a drastic change in her life and that she is capable of uncivilized actions. The action consists of her work in her garden to shut out the reality of her husband's death. However, she is not successful in this goal. She faces a memory of his death, and then she almost hits Jamie on the head with a hoe. She realizes that she is completely helpless at the time of her husband's accident, but now she has the power to control Jamie's life. As she raises the hoe, the rain comes and she realizes that her life was not what it should be. The rain cleanses her and brings about the renewal of her life.

Miss Welty uses three elements of characterization, setting and action to work together to enrich her story with vivid meaning. She combines these elements to support the theme of change, rebirth, and renewal.

Deloris Beard
Second Place, Formal Essay
Microcosm Award

The Laborer

Shaking the freshly poured bucket of chemical ferilizer, Pa ambled down the garden middle. Dust slowly rose and faded in to the dry summer air as he kicked clumps of sod over into the furrow with his scuffed, weatherbeaten brogans. His lanky legs were matchsticks that created a mysterious walk revealing the problems and pain of the past. The broad back of the sweat-drenched farmer appeared to bend a little further down with every rhythmic movement of his long brown arm. Reaching the length of the seedbed, Pa stood straight for a mere second only to sling the sweat off his wrinkled forehead; and then he returned to the next row. Time and experience had molded the ability of a poor sharecropper into an original artistic talent. Every pellet of fertilizer must be dropped from the practiced hand with utmost care. In that fertilizer lay his hopes for a fine crop.

Finishing the last of the return row, the sepulchral figure set down his bucket, stood straight as he pushed his arched back forward with his arms, and then raised his old straw hat to run his fingers through the thin gray hair. In an authoritative tone Pa said, "Fill it 'bout half full," and I promptly picked up a sack to refill the container. While I replenished the bucket, he pulled the soaked workshirt out of his dirty pants and released the buttons to air the skin of his sweaty chest hidden behind the straps of the work-stained undershirt. He stood firm and straight like a statue. A stream of sweat fell from the prominent nose into the fertilizer when the laborer bent to raise the new bucketful. As he trod away, he pushed his hat back upon his head and calmly stated," It ain't done 'less it's done right."

Russell Berry
Third Place, Informal Essay
Microcosm Award

You Walk On 'Em Too

In dealing with a subject like shoes it is best to get to the soul of the matter. The bare facts lie with the feet. Most people have feet. Usually two, sometimes less.

Feet are divided into two types–left feet and right feet. Each of these was designed to fit into the left and right shoe. Some people while dressing with their eyes closed in the morning put the left shoe on the right foot and the left foot in the wrong shoe. This is not right.

We now come to the problem of buying and selling shoes. Where do we get shoes They not grow on shoe trees. They are made of leather. Most leather comes from the hide of cows. First, the hide is taken to a tanner to be tanned. Next, the leather is taken to shoe factories to be made into the finished products. These factories have departments which make different parts of the shoe. To name two, there are the heel department and the department that fastens tongues on shoes, also known as the tongue-lashing department. All these departments are headed by one executive. He has two major functions: (1) to wake up the secretary to tell her when to go home, and (2) to take vacations.

In buying shoes you need two other things: money and flexible feet. The second thing is very important because no matter what size your feet are, the salesman will always give you a different size and convince you it fits. Most customers are very easily swayed by smooth-talking salesmen. In the end they will buy shoes that are at least a size too small, and in a little while they will have to return to buy a larger pair. At this point the salesman persuades them that their feet are growing too fast and that they will have to try the company's new model, high powered, non-thread, no-knocks shoes. Hence the term "sneaks." Another type is designed for wear around the house. This, in honor of the man of the house, is called a loafer.

It should be stated here that shoes are very essential to everyone's future. You can use shoes to hide Christmas socks; Although if you are caught in this underhanded practice, the socks are likely to come a little higher. Shoes are also used to drop on the floor anytime after midnight to see whether the neighbors downstairs are asleep. Shoes are handy to throw at

cats that think they can sing. Besides all these major uses, shoes have another minor use; namely, for walking.

Let me urge you to remember the motto of the old woman who lived with her shoes on: "Always stand on your own two feet." So don't stand on other people's shoes. They're likely to think you're a heel.

Brenda Henderson
Third Place, Informal Essay
Micrososm Award

Tantalizing Tension

To me, life seems a poem, full of tugs
to Left and Right; to High and Low; to
  Sloth,
Ambition--every opposite pair--with hugs
mixed in with slaps; (like a flitting
  moth

darts in and out, bringing living beauty,
  yet,
in bringing eggs, portending later grief
to those immersed in woolens' cozy debt--
like Time, a certain kind of thief).

Each pair, in turn, somehow gets satisfied;
each leaves one only little worse for wear;
the poem heads toward home--it has not
  died;
and some can say,"He/she was there!"

Without a tension, spirit tends to sag
too low for light to reach; and life may
  flag.

James A. Bateman

Chance of a Lifetime

It isn't very often that a hunter has an opportunity to kill a record-book whitetail buck while still hunting. But during primitive weapon season anterless deer are legal, and a hunter usually shoots the first deer that comes along.

That Sunday morning was a different situation. Two of my friends and I went to the Homochitto National Forest about fifteen miles west of Brookhaven where several trophy bucks were roaming the woods. We lined a pipeline about 300 yards apart, waiting for a slickhead or young buck to fall prey to our ambush.

At daylight, I realized that I was sitting in the middle of about fifty turkeys roosting on both sides of the pipeline. Being frustrated by this misfortune, I moved into a large cutover area to do some stalking. I noticed that a monstrous buck had been walking the muddy path in which I was standing. The tracks couldn't have been over an hour old and he was moving into the woods on the backside of the cutover. I sat down and ate a Snickers while I thought of a way to outsmart this monarch of the woodlands. I decided to get on the edge of this briared jungle and wait him out, not matter how long it took. I briefly scouted the area and found several large scrapes in a small creek bottom surrounded by towering hardwood ridges. I found the best possible location to observe the scrapes and sat against a small hickory tree wondering if I were just wasting my time.

After what seemed like hours, a small doe appeared on the ridge parallel to me. I decided not to shoot her because the old, lonely buck was probably looking for a mate and might follow her trail. To my amazement, I was right for once this year. Like a ghost, he appeared in the creek bottom. It was the largest buck I had ever seen dead or alive, pictured or real. It was frightening having a deer of this size moving toward me and knowing the smallest mistake could ruin my whole morning and all my years of hunting. His rack was massive, carrying at least ten points, some over a foot in length. Immediately I knew this was a record-book buck and I might not ever see one this big again. Time seemed to freeze as he slowly moved in my direction. Every few feet he would stop, smelling the cold still air and looking in every direction making sure his destination was clear. I studied every movement he made, whether it was the twitching

of a ear or an occasional glance of his eyes. Not once did he sense my presence; it was more perfect than I had ever imagined. For nine years I had waited for this moment. He was finally where I wanted him, Twenty yards away and completely unaware of his inevitable death. I slowly raised my trusty Hawken rifle and aligned my sights right behind his shoulder for Hawken rifle and aligned my sights right behind his shoulder for a quick, clean kill. When I squeezed the trigger there was no kick, boom of the rifle, or smoke from the black powder. Instead, all I heard was the sharp ping of the hammer striking a faulty percussion cap. The buck quickly looked up at me, knowing I was helpless and bounded up the ridge across from me only to look back one last time before disappearing into the dense brush.

Fate had won. All my planning and determination had failed because of one bad cap in thirty. The buck of my dreams had just escaped his death and left me feeling infuriated and totally exhausted.

Michael Shirley
Third Short Story
Microcosm Award

The Decision

She wakes to the clamor of the alarm clock. She is almost deaf now; she has been for the last eight years. The old alarm clock did not wake her up anymore; so she bought a new one with a two-minute alarm loud enough to wake up the entire building.

She rises from her bed. It is not really a bed. It is an old steel-frame cot which she bought at the Goodwill store two blocks away. The blankets are good, though. Two real wool blankets that her daughter gave her. Every summer she puts them in her trunk with plenty of mothballs.

She shuffles into her tiny kitchen-living room combination. Her arthritis is bad this morning, probably because it was so cold last night. She heats up a pan of water for her morning coffee. These days she adds a lot of milk because at her age her stomach will not tolerate the strong black coffee she used to drink.

The coffee ready, she turns on the television and sits in her rocking chair. The "Today" show is on. The television is loud, too, but she does not realize how loud it is. She rocks back and forth drinking her coffee and watching television.

A few hours later, she begins to get hungry. She goes to the refrigerator and takes out two eggs and some bread. She puts the eggs in the same pan that she used to make her coffee in and fills the pan with water. She puts the pan on the stove, her hand shaking. She turns the burner on. The gas stove is old, and she is grateful that it is still working.

She reaches up to the jar of mayonnaise in the open cupboard. Soon, she thinks, very soon. The eggs are done and she makes a sandwich. She pours a glass of milk and goes back to her rocking chair and television set.

She eats and then sits there for hours as she always does. A soap opera is on and the young girl in the program resembles her daughter, Jennifer. She thinks about Jennifer, and her son, Paul. She has not seen them for years. They both live in California, only two thousand miles away. The letters have stopped coming as often as they used to. They write her about six times a year, and send pictures of their children. The children, especially Paul's son, Mark, have her husband's facial

structure. She does not like to look at the pictures because of the resemblence. She misses her husband very much. She never thought she would outlive the strong, husky man she married so long ago. It was the heart attact that killed him. Actually, it was his stubborness that did it. If only he would have taken his medicine, she thinks. If only he would not have insisted on moving all the furniture himself when they got the apartment. He had retired and they could not keep their house. It cost too much. If only he would have paid someone to help. If only... but that is past. What is the past? The past is the present to her; it is all she has except the television.

The news is on now. She gets up to fix her supper which is another egg sandwich and glass of milk. She sits in her chair again and falls asleep. When she wakes, it is dark outside. An old Humphrey Bogart movie is on. She remembers it from her days as a young teenager.

She thinks of the wonderful times she had. She thinks again of her husband, of how they met. He was so shy when she took him home to meet her parents. A year later they married. She thinks of her first child, who is Paul, and her second child, who is Jennifer. She remembers the little brick house and all the smiles and tears and memories it held. She wonders who is living there now. Then she remembers that it was torn down along with all the other houses to make room for a shopping mall. She wipes the tears from her eyes as she gets up and walks to the stove again. She blows out the pilot lights and turns on the stove, but this time it is not to cook her supper.

Annette L. Savarese
Brookhaven High School
Junior Division, First Place
Short Story, MICROCOSM AWARD

Drifters

Two feathery clouds
sail aimlessly across the night sky.
They drift closer to each other,
Embracing briefly,
Stealing all the moonlight for themselves.
And a shaft of pure silver
Illuminates the forest.
Leaves stir restlessly,
Some loosening their grasp
On high branches
To drift, spiraling lazily
Down and down,
To settle among the
Gnarled roots of the trees.

Amy Cohlan
Brookheaven Academy
Junior Division, First Place
Poetry, *Microcosm Award*

Horatio's Oration

Friends, honorable Danes, pray give me heed. We gather on this most somber occasion to inter the bodies of not one, but four! Four,whose deaths were most foul and unnatural. Ay, Ay even so, I speak of murder!!

The good King Hamlet lay not two months in his grave, when his brother Claudius wed the good Queen Gertrude and took the crown. At this time a ghost was thrice seen stalking Elsinore! O, for a ghost to walk, what trouble that foretells! The ghost was truly the spirit of the late King Hamlet. And to the Prince's ears he did reveal such treachery: "The serpent that did sting the late king's life, then wore his crown!" And thus was Prince Hamlet bound to revenge by his father's spirit, though it was not in young Hamlet's nature to avenge and murder. Of this be sure, for I knew him well. I mourn young Hamlet as a brother. Aye my eyes grow moist with my emotion.

Lest my weakness convert my stern effects, I shall finish my tale.

Having dispatched of his brother by pouring poison in the sleeping king's ear, Claudius hastened to claim Denmark, the crown, and the Queen. Perchance you think the noble Hamlet misled to believe the word of a immortal being. Nay, the Prince did not hasten, but devised a plot to assure himself of his uncle's guilt. His madness was but a disguise to hide his intent and protect his life.

In the Queen's closet he pleaded with her to see the folly of her marriage. He told of his father's murder, but so shocking was the news that Gertrude never seemed to fully comprehend it. A sound from behind the arras convinced Hamlet of a spying presence. Drawing his sword he blindly stabbed and killed Polonius, the Lord Chamberlain. This fateful mistake hastened Claudius to send Hamlet to England, not on a commission, but to his death! It was Hamlet's good fortune that their vessel was attacked by pirates. Taken by them, Hamlet made a deal, and the pirates returned him to Denmark. Laertes, son of Polonius, found himself in a similar position to Hamlet, that of avenging a father's death. His grief and rage were intensified by the madness and sudden death of the beautiful Ophelia, driven to distraction by her father's death at her lover's hands.

Claudius and Laertes plotted against Hamlet, arranging a

fencing match with an extravagant wager. The guileless Hamlet never suspected that his opponent used an unbated sword. A poisoned tip assured death with even a scratch from the weapon. The duel began, and Oh, such bloody treachery ensued that I can scarce think upon it. But I steel myself, for the story must by told.

Hamlet scored the first three hits. And Claudius placed a pearl in wine to toast his skill. But nay, believe it not, 'twas no pearl... but poison! Unknowingly, the queen drank deeply to her son's success. Laertes wounded Hamlet, and in the scuffle that followed they exchanged weapons. Then Hamlet dealt Laertes a fatel blow. They stood thus, wounded, bleeding, they that were once friends, when the queen fell to the floor. Her last words were a warning of the poison cup. Laertes told of the envenomed sword whose poison would soon claim both him and Hamlet. Hamlet, bleeding, dying, turned upon and stabbed the treacherous Claudius. Hamlet held the cup to Claudius' lips and made him drink of the poison. I would have followed, so was my intent. But Hamlet bade me live and clear his name. This I do now.

Loyal Danes, my countrymen, your ears should burn with the truths you have heard.What evil is it that can claim so many lives? What has the power to come between young lovers, part a mother and her son, ah, even turn brother against brother, friend against friend.

But pray, stay your judgment. So complex is man, and varied his emotions, that we cannot understand, and thus can't judge, the reasons for his actions. Judgement for our sins lies in the eyes of heaven.

With his dying voice, fellow Danes, Hamlet cast his vote with Fortinbras. Pray, heed the honorable Prince's judgment, and accept Fortinbras' rule over our beloved country.

And I pray, most earnestly, do tender reverence to these dear ones who have so recently departed from us. Mourn with me.

Jennifer Longmire
Adams County Christian School
Junior Division, First Place
Informal Essay, *Microcosm Award*

Maturity in "The Bear" and "Flight"

William Faulkner and John Steinbeck capture the experiences of growing up physically and emotionally in two classic American short stories, "The Bear" and "Flight." One sees many differences in the maturing of the two boys in these stories. While the boy in the "The Bear" has time to grow up slowly and wisely, Pepe is flung into maturity without time to prepare. In "The Bear" the main character is the son of a wealthy Southerner who has been allowed to go on the yearly hunt with his father and his father's friends. The climax of the routine hunt is to catch a glimpse of the huge and ancient bear named "Ole Ben." The boy's enchantment after seeing the bear begins his crusade. The bear's long existence is due to his wisdom and understanding of the hunter. The boy learns of this and realizes that if he is to see the bear again he must relinquish himself to the wilderness, leaving behind his weapons of civilization.

The old and majestic forest befriends the boy and he is able to rob it of many of its secrets. Through the boy's patience and skillfulnes as a woodsman, he encounters the bear again after a number of years. Now when the boy faces the bear, he holds a gun and has the companionship of a small hunting dog. The boy is unable to shoot the bear because through the years he has learned qualities and assets from the bear. The boy becomes a man because he can see the beauty of nature and can let the bear live, not wishing to kill it simply to satisfy his ego.

In the story "Flight" the situation differs, for instead of a boy learning to hunt be becomes the hunted. The boy's name is Pepe and the setting is in California where the destitution of the poor migrate workers is the way of life. Pepe and his family must share the work if they are to survive. Pepe's first realization of his growing up occurs when his mother trusts him and allows him to to into town on business. While in town Pepe succumbs to the influence of liquor, and the knife, seeming to fly of its own volition out of Pepe's hand, strikes the heart of a pushy stranger. It is then Pepe realizes he must take on the responsiblities of a man. He flees the scene and instantly becomes a hunted animal.

Pepe seeks refuge in the unfriendly desert where nature becomes his bitter foe. While trying to escape his hunters, he is wounded by a sliver of rock, his wound festering into a gangrenous mass. Pepe finds himself unable to escape nature's hostility towards him, and he

finally melts back into the earth becoming a permanent part of her dusty grave.

There are two major differences in the maturing processes of the boy in "The Bear" and Pepe. Nature plays an important role in each of the boys maturation. In "The Bear" Faulkner expresses his ideas ofromanticism in nature, showing it to be gentle, beautiful, and helpful. However, in "Flight" Steinbeck, stressing the naturalistic point of view, pictures nature as uncaring and even hostile to the boy. Another difference in the stories is the importance of the fathers of the two boys. In "The Bear" the boy's father aids in his maturation because the boy learns qualities such as pride, truth, and honesty from him. In "Flight" Pepe's father has been killed and is unable to help guide Pepe through maturation. Maybe if Pepe's father had been there to help guide him, he wouldn't have been rushed into maturity so tragically.

Both boys share the same experience of growing up, but each has to interpret his world and its mysteries according to widely differing elements in his maturation rituals.

Suezan Cupit
Brookhaven Academy
First Place formal essay
Microcosm Award

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